

BLM LAND USE PLANNING

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BACKGROUND:

The Bureau of Land management (BLM) has 162 land use plans that provide the basis for every action and approved use on the public lands managed by the BLM, including 262 million acres of surface lands and 700 million acres of mineral estate. Planning emphasizes a collaborative environment, where local, State, and Tribal governments, the public, industry and local groups work with the BLM to identify appropriate multiple uses of the public lands.

PURPOSE OF LAND USE PLANNING:

Land use plans are used to:

- ◆ Express desired outcomes or desired future conditions in terms of specific goals, standards and objectives;
- ◆ Identify uses, or allocations, that are allowable on the public lands and mineral;
- ◆ Identify the actions needed to achieve the desired outcomes;
- ◆ Identify lands for retention, and possible disposal or acquisition;
- ◆ Establish management direction for lands that may come under BLM jurisdiction in the future.

ENABLING LEGISLATION FOR LAND USE PLANNING:

1. Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976: BLM's Mission. Managing the public lands under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield.

Requirements - Section 202: Land Use Planning.

"The Secretary shall, with public involvement...develop, maintain, and when appropriate, revise land use plans...."

2. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969: "...encourage a productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment...."

Requirements - "Utilize a systematic, interdisciplinary approach which will insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and environmental design arts in planning and in decision making which may have an effect on man's environment."

{BLM's land use planning process (43 CFR 1610), intertwines the FLPMA and NEPA regulations.}

PRINCIPLES OF LAND USE PLANNING:

Section 202 of FLPMA provides the following principles of land use planning:

- ◆ Follow the principles of multiple use and sustained yield;
- ◆ Use a systematic, interdisciplinary approach, fully considering physical, biological, economic and social aspects of public land management;
- ◆ Identify, designate, protect and specially manage areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs);
- ◆ Consider relative significance of the public land products, services, and use to local economies;
- ◆ Rely, to the extent available, on an inventory of the public lands, their resources, and other values;
- ◆ Consider present and potential uses of the public lands;
- ◆ Consider the relative scarcity of the values involved and the availability of alternative means and sites for realization of those values;
- ◆ Weigh long-term benefits to the public against short-term benefits;
- ◆ Comply with applicable pollution control laws; and

- ◆ “[C]oordinate the land use inventory, planning, and management activities of or for such lands with the land use planning and management programs of other Federal departments and agencies and of the States, [tribes,] and local governments within which the lands are located.” (Section 202(c)(9))

PROCESS OF LAND USE PLANNING (43 CFR 1610):

The BLM uses a multi-step process when developing a resource management plan (RMP). Some of the steps may occur concurrently. Some situations may require the manager to supplement previous work as additional information becomes available. These steps have been fully integrated with the NEPA process and the Council on Environmental Quality CEQ guidelines. The steps are:

Identify Issues:

- ◆ Issue Notice of Intent (NOI) to begin the scoping process to identify issues and develop planning criteria and begin public participation.

Develop Planning Criteria:

- ◆ Establish constraints, guides, and determine what will or will not be done or considered during the planning process.
- ◆ Produce a scoping report for public review, including final planning criteria.

Inventory Data and Information Collection:

- ◆ Assemble available inventory data and information.

Analyze the Management Situation:

- ◆ Describe pertinent physical and biological characteristics and evaluate the capability and condition of the resources.

Formulate Alternatives:

- ◆ Identify a reasonable range of alternatives to meet the purpose and need for the planning effort.

Estimate Effects of Alternatives:

- ◆ Estimate the environmental, social and economic impact or effects of each alternative on the environment and management situation.

Select Preferred Alternative:

- ◆ Issue a Notice of Availability (NOA) of a Draft Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); 90-day public review.

Select the Resource Management Plan:

- ◆ Review and analyze public comments, opinions, suggestions, and recommendations.
- ◆ Issue a Notice of Availability (NOA) of Proposed Plan/Final EIS.
- ◆ Initiate a 30-day protest period and concurrent 60-day Governor’s review.
- ◆ Issue a Notice of Availability NOA for the Record of Decisions/Final Plan after the protests are resolved for actions of national interest.

Monitor and Evaluate:

- ◆ Implement decisions and monitor and evaluate the RMP

An Overview of the RMP/EIS Level Planning Process

The following chart depicts the planning requirements outlined above as well as the NEPA documentation requirements for the EIS-level planning process. This process is used for new RMPs, RMP revisions, and EIS-level plan amendments.

